

Feb 23, 2024

Thank you for convening this hearing on a topic that every American cares deeply about: their time. I'm Jon Steinman, the co-founder of the 4 Day Week Campaign US, also known as WorkFour, and I'm excited to be testifying on behalf of HB 559. The time has come for this legislation.

No matter who you are or what you do, we can all agree that we could use more of our own time. Time is not a partisan issue. Time is a human issue.

Time is also a stubborn thing. Managing one's time on a fixed schedule against the demands of work, school, family, and community is stressful. There's often no flexibility; too much of the time too little slack. But it doesn't have to be. We can change how we live. We can give ourselves more time.

That's why I'm so grateful for the leadership of Del. Vaughn Stewart, who has been a real champion for people to have more agency over their own time, and the political will of this committee, to deliver more time to Marylanders. The bill under consideration today would not move everyone into a 4 Day Week; by starting with state employees Maryland will be proving that the transition can be done by the public sector, matching the vanguard in the private sector that is already embracing the 4 Day Week.

By moving this bill forward, Maryland will be showing the world how to step confidently into the future, how to share the fruits of our economic prosperity with everyone in the form of precious time, and how to genuinely support each and every person's individual pursuit of happiness.

As the co-founder of the 4 Day Week Campaign in the US – or WorkFour – I know both how important our time is and how stubborn we are to change. A century ago the modern weekend was born, giving Americans an extra day to invest in themselves, their families, and their communities.

Critics thundered that the weekend would hobble the economy, set our nation back, and encourage profligacy of all kinds – and history proved them utterly wrong.

Soon after creating the weekend, our economy grew into the envy of the world, a thriving middle class was born, unparalleled innovation and productivity marked American industry, and recreation and leisure stopped being exclusively for the wealthiest. Rather than set us back, giving more time to Americans launched us ahead of the global pack. Some 100 years later, it's time for another update.

Endorsements for expanding the weekend have come in the last year from such disparate public figures as former President Barack Obama to JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon. They point to

rapidly advancing technology as the reason to rethink the 5 day work week. But tech is only one impetus.

The 4 Day Week benefits employers by:

- **Increasing Productivity:** Studies have shown that shorter workweeks can lead to higher levels of productivity. By having more time for rest, family, and personal pursuits, employees return to work rejuvenated and more focused, resulting in greater efficiency during working hours.
- **Enhancing Employee Engagement:** Offering a shorter workweek demonstrates a commitment to employee well-being, fostering a positive work culture and improving morale. Engaged employees are more likely to be loyal, innovative, and dedicated to their work.
- **Improving Recruitment and Retention:** In a competitive job market, companies that prioritize work-life balance and offer shorter workweeks stand out as desirable employers. Studies show that companies with a four-day workweek attract more applicants and reduce turnover rates, saving on recruitment and training costs.

Workers benefit from the 4 Day week through:

- **Improved Work-Life Balance:** A shorter workweek allows employees to better balance their professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments. This leads to reduced stress, better mental health, and stronger relationships outside of work.
- **Health and Well-being:** Employees at companies with four-day workweeks report significantly lower levels of burnout. Meanwhile, long working hours have been linked to various health issues, including burnout, heart disease, and mental health issues. Shortening the workweek can mitigate these risks and promote overall well-being.
- **Opportunities for Personal Development:** With more time outside of work, employees can pursue hobbies, further their education, or engage in community activities. This not only enriches their lives but also fosters personal growth and fulfillment.

And society benefits:

- **Economic Stimulus:** A shorter workweek can stimulate economic activity by spreading employment opportunities across more workers. This can help address unemployment and underemployment issues while boosting consumer spending.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Reducing working hours can lead to a decrease in commuting and energy consumption, contributing to environmental sustainability and mitigating climate change.
- **Social Equity:** Shorter workweeks promote equity by allowing more time for caregiving responsibilities, volunteering, and civic engagement. This helps create a more inclusive and cohesive society.

Maryland is now poised to be a leader in delivering these benefits to residents of the state, and showing all others how to get to a better future. Thank you for holding this hearing, for moving on a policy that benefits everyone, and for not waiting for others to lead. I look forward to working with you and the state of Maryland to make sure the 4 Day Week is implemented equitably so that all may benefit – just as we all benefited from the original weekend, created by an earlier era’s leaders who saw a better future.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to working with you and the state of Maryland to make sure the 4 Day Week is equitably implemented – and that what happens here is a model for the rest of the nation to follow.